

April 2006

Dear District Official,

We are pleased to announce that final AP[®] Course Audit criteria and guidelines are now available online at <http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/courseaudit>.

Thousands of educators provided detailed feedback on the draft requirements circulated last fall, which resulted in significant changes to the original course criteria. In fact, every single one of the criteria was revised based on your suggestions and recommendations. As a result, these criteria now reflect a powerful national consensus, across colleges, universities, and public and private secondary schools, regarding which elements are typically found in college-level curricula.

Please review the AP Course Audit pages on AP Central. Important changes to the draft requirements include:

- Teachers do not have to submit a sample assignment and exam as supporting material.
- After the initial AP Course Audit for 2007-08 AP courses, schools will not need to submit AP Course Audit forms or syllabi annually unless the teacher has changed, the school offers a new AP course, or the curricular and resource requirements for a course undergo significant revision. Each fall, the principal may request renewal of the school's course authorizations through a form that will be provided.
- Guidelines are now available for preparing your AP course syllabus for review.
- Teacher credentials, such as educational background and professional development, will not be collected as part of the AP Course Audit.
- Requirements for a minimum number of instructional minutes for AP Chemistry have been removed.

Each teacher leading an AP course must submit AP Course Audit materials, even if he or she will be using a district developed and mandated syllabus. Districts can work with their schools' teachers to ensure they understand the AP Course Audit's curricular requirements and timeline. Districts can also help teachers prepare syllabi for submission.

The AP Program unequivocally supports the principle that each individual school must develop its own curriculum for courses labeled "AP." Rather than mandating any one curriculum for AP courses, the AP Course Audit instead provides each AP teacher with a set of expectations that college and secondary school faculty nationwide have established for college-level courses. AP teachers are encouraged to develop or maintain their own curriculum that either includes or exceeds each of these expectations; such courses will be authorized to use the "AP" designation. Credit for the success of AP courses belongs to the individual schools and teachers that create powerful, locally designed AP curricula.

Detailed instructions for accessing and submitting AP Course Audit materials via the Web will be posted on AP Central in July 2006. Instructions will also be mailed to principals before August 1, 2006, and again in September. Schools may submit AP Course Audit materials anytime between August 1, 2006, and June 1, 2007.

We thank those of you who have taken the time to share your insights and feedback, and look forward to providing this valuable new service for schools.

Advanced Placement Program
The College Board

Frequently Asked Questions

Policies and Procedures

Are there any fees associated with the AP Course Audit?

No, there is no fee to participate in the AP Course Audit or receive authorization to use the “AP” designation for courses.

Can schools order and administer AP Exams without completing the AP Course Audit?

Yes, the AP Course Audit is only required for schools desiring to:

- label their courses “AP”
- use that “AP” designation on students’ transcripts
- be listed in the ledger of authorized AP courses published on the College Board’s Web site and distributed each fall to college and university admissions offices.

Schools that simply offer the AP Exam as an opportunity for their students to earn college credit, without actually labeling the school’s courses “AP,” do not need to participate in the AP Course Audit, and can continue offering AP Exams to their students

Does the fact that the AP Course Audit is being conducted for courses offered in the 2007-08 academic year mean we can’t use the “AP” designation on courses we offer during 2005-06 and 2006-07?

The AP Program expects schools using the “AP” designation now to follow the guidelines in each subject’s official AP Course Description, and then to participate in the AP Course Audit and receive authorization before continuing to apply the “AP” designation to courses offered in the 2007-08 academic year.

Does the College Board recommend a particular class size for AP courses?

The College Board recognizes that schools have varying degrees of human and financial resources, which can affect class size. Each individual school should make a decision that best suits its needs.

Will the College Board audit “Pre-AP” courses?

The College Board does not design, develop, or assess courses labeled “Pre-AP.” The College Board discourages the labeling of courses as “Pre-AP.” Typically, such courses create a track, thereby limiting access to AP classes. The College Board supports the assertion that all students should have access to preparation for AP and other challenging courses. Courses labeled “Pre-AP” can inappropriately restrict access to AP and other college-level work and as such, are inconsistent with the fundamental purpose of the College Board’s Pre-AP initiatives, which are professional development workshops designed to help teachers instill more rigor in whatever courses they are teaching students in the years prior to AP.

Do schools have to complete the audit each year?

After the initial AP Course Audit for 2007-08 AP courses, schools will not need to submit AP Course Audit forms or syllabi annually unless the teacher has changed, the school offers a new AP course, or the curricular and resource requirements for a course undergo significant revision.

Each fall, the principal may request renewal of the school's course authorizations through a form that will be provided.

I teach more than one section of my AP course. Do I have to submit a syllabus for each section?

Teachers must submit one syllabus for each AP course taught. So long as a teacher teaching multiple sections of the same course uses the same syllabus for each section, only that syllabus needs to be submitted. If a teacher teaches two different AP courses, for example, AP U.S. History and AP World History, he or she will have to submit separate AP Course Audit forms and syllabi for each subject.

What does authorization actually entail? How is provisional authorization different?

Authorization to use the "AP" designation for your course indicates College Board permission to use the designation in your schedule, course catalog, program, transcripts, and informational or marketing materials. The course will be listed as an authorized AP course in a ledger sent to colleges and universities each fall and made available to the public on the College Board's Web site.

Provisional authorization, on the other hand, which is granted to principals who intend to offer an AP course in a future year, but have not yet identified the teacher, indicates College Board permission to use the "AP" designation in your schedule, course catalog, program, and informational or marketing materials. Because a teacher has not yet been appointed nor a syllabus submitted, the AP Program will not be able to list courses that are only provisionally authorized within the ledger of authorized AP courses sent to colleges and universities, and the provisional authorization does not allow the use of the "AP" designation on a student's transcript. Provisional authorizations only give the school the right to start advertising an AP course in their course registration materials without having yet appointed the AP teacher.

What if my AP teacher leaves the school after the AP Course Audit has been completed?

The replacement teacher must submit the AP Course Audit form and syllabus for review. If a previously approved syllabus will be used in the course, the teacher will need to submit that syllabus for verification purposes. If the teacher is replaced after June 1, 2007, it is incumbent upon the replacement teacher to submit materials for review in order for your school's entry in the 2007-08 ledger to accurately represent the AP program at your school.

What if we do not have an AP teacher in place for the 2007-08 academic year until after the June 1, 2007 deadline?

Schools may submit course audit materials after June 1, 2007 for the 2007-08 academic year, but even if authorized, these courses will not appear in the ledger sent to colleges and universities because it will have already gone to press. A Web version of the ledger, however, will be updated on a continual basis for 2007-08 courses approved after the June 1 deadline.

What role can districts play in the AP Course Audit?

Districts can work with their schools' teachers to ensure they understand the AP Course Audit's curricular requirements and timeline. Districts can also help teachers prepare syllabi for submission.

Fulfilling AP Course Audit Curricular Requirements

What is a “hands-on” lab?

A hands-on laboratory experience is one in which students manipulate, observe, explore, and think about science using concrete materials, as opposed to a virtual simulation or a demonstration conducted by a teacher. Hands-on labs must be guided by a science educator.

We cover one or more of the AP Course Audit curricular requirements in a course prior to the AP course, rather than in the AP course itself. Can we still receive authorization to use the “AP” designation?

Authorization will be granted on a case-by-case basis. If you cannot attest to inclusion in your course of one or more of the AP Course Audit curricular requirements when you initial the AP Course Audit form, you should follow the instructions on that form for “Alternate Approaches,” as well as the processes for “Describing Alternate Approaches” in your AP course syllabus.

How do we complete the AP Course Audit for a multiyear course, and may we affix the “AP” designation to each year of a multiyear course?

Colleges and universities typically expect that the AP course is taught across no more than one academic year. If you cannot attest to inclusion of all of the AP Course Audit curricular requirements within one academic year when you initial the AP Course Audit form, you should follow the instructions on that form for “Alternate Approaches,” as well as the processes for “Describing an Alternate Approach to an AP Course.” (You will need to submit syllabi for each of the years in which you teach the AP course. Your syllabi will need to demonstrate that both years of study are at the college level and that all AP Course Audit curricular requirements are fulfilled across the sequence of courses.) Authorization will be granted on a case-by-case basis.

The title we use for the course at our school is slightly different from the official AP name of the course (for example, “Western Civilization” is our title for the course that prepares students for the AP European History Exam). Can we affix the “AP” designation to our own title for the course when we list that course on students’ transcripts, in our course catalogs, etc?

No, the “AP” designation can only be used in association with the official AP course titles. But you can continue to use your current course title and then insert the official AP course title in brackets either before or after your own course title.

Examples of acceptable and unacceptable course titles:

OK: AP European History

OK: Western Civilization [AP European History]

OK: [AP European History] Western Civilization

NOT OK: AP Western Civilization

We combine AP courses at our school (for example, we combine AP U.S. History and AP English Literature into an interdisciplinary course called American Studies)—how do we receive authorization to conduct such combined AP courses, and how should we then affix the “AP” designation to such courses?

Complete the AP Course Audit forms for both courses and submit with each form the syllabus for the interdisciplinary course. If both AP subjects' curricular requirements are fulfilled, you will receive authorization for both AP courses. The "AP" designation can only be used with the official AP course titles, but you can certainly continue to use your current course title and then insert the official AP course titles in brackets either before or after your own course title.

Examples of acceptable and unacceptable course titles:

OK: AP English Literature and Composition/AP United States History

OK: American Studies [AP English Literature and Composition/AP United States History]

OK: [AP English Literature and Composition/AP United States History] American Studies

NOT OK: AP American Studies

Alternate Providers

If our school uses a virtual school or other online provider to deliver an online AP course to our students, can that course be listed as an AP course on the student's transcript and in the ledger of AP courses offered at our school?

The course can only be listed as an AP course on a student's transcript if the virtual school or online provider has received permission from the College Board to label its course "AP." For the 2007-08 academic year, each virtual school or online provider must complete the AP Course Audit before it can label its course(s) "AP." A list of authorized online AP courses will be listed on the AP Course Audit Web site.

Note: Online science courses can only be labeled "AP" if the provider either independently or in conjunction with the students' principal ensures that students have a guided, hands-on (not virtual) laboratory experience. All AP science courses, including online courses authorized to use the "AP" designation, require the presence of a science educator to supervise the students during their laboratory work.

If the secondary school wishes to include the online AP course among its authorized courses in the ledger sent to colleges and universities, the school will be given the opportunity via the Web to indicate which authorized courses they are offering to their students. Details on this process will be posted on AP Central in July 2006. Instructions will also be mailed to principals before August 1, 2006 and again in September. (A copy of this information will be sent to AP Coordinators.)

How do homeschooled students receive authorization to use the "AP" designation on their course work?

Homeschool educators wishing to label their courses "AP" must complete and return the AP Course Audit form and syllabus. Instructions on how homeschool educators can submit AP Course Audit materials will be posted on AP Central in July 2006.

Can a dual-enrollment or IB course also be labeled "AP?"

The teachers of these courses and the principals at the schools providing these dual-enrollment/IB opportunities to their students must complete and submit the AP Course Audit form and syllabus for review. If authorized, these courses may be labeled "AP". The "AP" designation can only be used with the official AP course titles, but if your current course title differs from the official AP course title, you can certainly continue to use your current course title and then insert the official AP course title in brackets either before or after your own course title.